

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended): A Modbus slave device operable in an agile mode, the slave device being capable of receiving, interpreting, and responding to first-type and second-type message frames, the slave device comprising:

means for detecting a master query message frame generated by a master device;

and

means, responsive to a first incoming character of the master query message frame, for setting a message-type control bit to a first value if the first incoming character is a prompt character for the first-type message frame, and for setting the message-type control bit to a second value if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first-type message frame;

means for interpreting the master query message frame as the first-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the first value and as the second-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the second value;

means for performing a command associated with the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame; and

means for generating a slave message frame responding to the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame and the command requires a response, the slave message frame being of the first-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the first value, the slave message frame being of the second-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the second value.

2. (Original): The slave device of claim 1, wherein the first-type message frame includes ASCII characters and the second-type message frame includes RTU characters.

3. (Original): The slave device of claim 1, wherein the slave device is a control bus in an energy management system.

4. (Currently amended): The slave device of claim 1, wherein the slave device is also operable in a fixed mode in which the slave device ~~can~~ interprets and responds with only one of the first-type and second-type message frames as determined by the message-type control bit, and further including means, including a mode-type control bit, for selecting one of the fixed mode and the agile mode, the mode-type control bit being set to a first value to place the slave device in the fixed mode and being set to a second value to place the slave device in the agile mode.

5. (Currently amended): A Modbus slave device operable in an agile mode, the slave device comprising:

means for detecting a first incoming character of a master query message frame generated by a master device; and

means for interpreting the master query message as a first-type message frame if the first incoming character is a prompt character for the first-type message frame, and for interpreting the master query message as a second-type message frame if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first-type message frame, the first-type message frame having only first data characters, the second-type message frame having only second data characters.

6. (Currently amended): The slave device of claim 5, wherein the ~~first-type message frame includes~~ first data characters are ASCII characters and the ~~second-type message frame includes~~ second data characters are RTU characters.

7. (Original): The slave device of claim 5, further including means for performing a command associated with the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame.

8. (Original): The slave device of claim 7, further including means for generating a slave message frame responding to the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame and the command requires a response, the slave message frame being of the first-type message frame if the first incoming character is the prompt character for the first-type message frame, the slave message frame being of the second-type message frame if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first-type message frame.

9. (Original): The slave device of claim 5, wherein the slave device is a control bus in an energy management system.

10. (Currently amended): A method of automatically interpreting first-type and second-type message frames conveyed to a Modbus slave device, the method comprising:

detecting a first incoming character of a master query message frame generated by a master device;

interpreting the master query message frame as the first-type message frame if the first incoming character is a prompt character for the first-type message frame, the first-type message frame having only first data characters; and

interpreting the master query message frame as the second-type message frame if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first-type message frame, the second-type message frame having only second data characters.

11. (Currently amended): The method of claim 10, wherein the ~~first-type message frame~~ includes first data characters are ASCII characters and the ~~second-type message frame~~ includes second data characters are RTU characters.

12. (Original): The method of claim 10, further including performing a command associated with the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame.

13. (Original): The method of claim 12, further including generating a slave message frame responding to the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame and the command requires a response, the slave message frame being of the first-type message frame if the first incoming character is the prompt character for the first-type message frame, the slave message frame being of the second-type message frame if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first-type message frame.

14. (Currently amended): A method of automatically interpreting first-type and second-type message frames conveyed to a Modbus slave device, the method comprising:

- detecting a first incoming character of a master query message frame generated by a master device;

- setting a message-type control bit to a first value if the first incoming character is a prompt character for the first-type message frame;

- setting the message-type control bit to a second value if the first incoming character is not the prompt character for the first type of message ~~frame~~ frame;

- interpreting the master query message frame as the first-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the first value; and

- interpreting the master query message frame as the second-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the second value.

15. (Original): The method of claim 14, wherein the first-type message frame includes ASCII characters and the second-type message frame includes RTU binary characters.

16. (Original): The method of claim 14, further including performing a command associated with the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame.

17. (Original): The method of claim 16, further including generating a slave message frame responding to the master query message frame if the slave device is addressed in the master query message frame and the command requires a response, the slave message frame being of the first-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the first value, the slave message frame being of the second-type message frame if the message-type control bit has the second value.